ISSN(O): 2320-5407 | ISSN(P): 3107-4928

ISSN NO. 2320-5407

International Journal of Advanced Research

Publisher's Name: Jana Publication and Research LLP

www.journalijar.com

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-59612

Title: Challenges in Teaching and Learning Spoken French in Lower Secondary Education in Niger**:**

Recommendation: Accept after Minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		Good		
Techn. Quality		Good		
Clarity		Good		
Significance		Good		

Reviewer's ID: JPR-212

Detailed Reviewer's Report

This is a well-structured and clearly written study of the pedagogical, linguistic and sociocultural difficulties associated with teaching and learning spoken French at a lower secondary school in Niger. The manuscript is among the more carefully prepared submissions reviewed for this journal, and its combination of quantitative and qualitative data provides a coherent account of a genuinely under-researched context. The revisions required are modest rather than fundamental.

Strengths

The research problem is well defined and contextually grounded. The discussion of Niger's multilingual setting, including Hausa, Zarma-Songhay, Fulfulde, Kanuri and Tamaseq, effectively situates the findings within a broader sociolinguistic reality.

The mixed-methods design is appropriate and adequately justified through reference to Creswell and Plano Clark 2018. The triangulation of student questionnaires with teacher interviews is a sensible strategy for capturing both the extent and the meaning of the difficulties observed.

The methodology section is unusually transparent. The account of the preliminary survey, the rephrasing of instructions in Hausa where necessary, and the ethical procedures adopted demonstrates good research practice.

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The theoretical framework is well integrated. The discussion draws meaningfully on Dolz and Schneuwly 1998, Nonnon 2001, Cuq and Gruca 2017, Cummins 2000, Bandura 1997 and Vygotski 1978, and these sources are used to interpret the findings rather than simply listed.

The teacher profile data are the most revealing aspect of the study. The finding that all ten French teachers were contract teachers, that only half specialised in French, and that their academic backgrounds ranged from sociology and communication to history and computer science provides a compelling institutional explanation for the difficulties observed.

The recommendations, including French clubs, public speaking competitions, school theatre and educational radio, are practical and contextually appropriate.

The limitations section is honest and appropriately recognises the single-school setting and the reliance on self-reports.

Weaknesses

Internal inconsistency in citation dates. The reference list contains Nonnon 1999, but the text cites Nonnon 2001 in several places. Similarly, the text cites Halte 2005, while the reference list gives Halté and Rispail 2005. The citation Halte 2005 in the introduction should be corrected to Halté and Rispail 2005. The in-text citation Mariko without a year should be Mariko 2021.

Uncited sources in the reference list. Several works appear in the bibliography but are never cited in the text, including Altet 2002, Bruner 1983, Gauthier et al. 1997, Houssaye 1988, Legendre 2005, Perrenoud 1997, Puren 1988, UNESCO 2021, UNESCO 2024, Vigner 2015 and Weiss 2020. These should either be integrated into the argument or removed.

Uncited claims. The introduction refers to studies conducted in Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon without providing any citations. These should be referenced or removed.

Missing conceptual framework section. The discussion refers to "the study's conceptual framework, according to which oral proficiency is simultaneously influenced by teaching practices, language skills and the sociocultural environment," but no conceptual framework is presented in the methodology or introduction. This gap should be addressed, either by adding a short conceptual framework section or by removing the reference.

Duplicate table. Table 8 appears twice in the manuscript, once with a title and once without, and the two versions are not identical. This should be corrected.

Weaknesses in the quantitative reporting. The tables report frequencies and percentages in a very limited way. For example, Table 2 reports that all ten teachers were contract teachers, giving 100 percent, but the table format is unnecessary for a

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single-value result. Tables 6, 7, 9 and 10 report severity ratings such as "very high" and "high" without explaining how these ratings were derived or what numerical values underlie them. The reader is not told whether these are means, percentages or researcher judgements. This is a significant methodological weakness and should be clarified.

Small teacher sample. The teacher sample of ten is very small, and the interviews are used to support claims about teacher training and practice across the school. The authors should acknowledge more explicitly that the teacher data are illustrative rather than representative.

Language and style. There are a small number of typographical issues, including "Bandura's 1997" and "Vygotski's 1978" where the possessive apostrophe is used inconsistently, and "Sphinx Plus2- V5" which should be "Sphinx Plus² V5." The reference to Bandura 1986 in the bibliography is not cited in the text.

Recommendation

Minor to moderate revision required. This is a solid and publishable study that requires modest corrections. The authors should first correct all citation inconsistencies, particularly Nonnon 1999 and 2001, Halte 2005 and Halté and Rispail 2005, and Mariko 2021. Second, they should either integrate or remove the uncited sources in the reference list. Third, they should provide citations for the studies in Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon or remove the claim. Fourth, they should add a brief conceptual framework section or remove the reference to it in the discussion. Fifth, they should remove the duplicate Table 8. Sixth, they should explain how the severity ratings in Tables 6, 7, 9 and 10 were derived and provide the underlying numerical data. Seventh, they should acknowledge more explicitly the limitations of the small teacher sample. With these revisions, the manuscript will be suitable for publication.